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SOUTHERN SLAVERY

NOT FOUNDED

ON

SCRIPTURE WARRANT:

A Lecture,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM SOMMERVILLE, A. M.,

Reformed Presbyterian Minister, Cornwallis, N. S.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
PRINTED BY BARNES & COMPANY,
PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.
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PREFATORY NOTE.

This Lecture was originally delivered before the Acadia Lyceum, Horton, N. S. In deference to the wishes of friends who feel an interest in the discussion to which it relates, it is now given to the public.

December, 1864.

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LECTURE.

The civil war now unhappily raging in the United States, has led to the renewed discussion of the subject of slavery. It is known to you all that the Bible has been appealed to as sanctioning the system of slavery as it exists in the Southern States of North America. Convinced that a faithful application of Bible doctrine would eventually extinguish human bondage, my object in the present lecture will be to unfold the teachings of the word of God on this subject, and to shew that the slave-holders of the South can find no warrant for their system in the doctrine of servitude as taught in the Scriptures.

I would almost prefer avoiding, in the discussion, the term *slave* or *slavery*, and using in its stead, *permanent servant* or *permanent servitude*. The reason is this:— That the terms *slave* and *slavery* are so closely associated in the public mind with Southern thralldom, that their use is calculated to leave a false impression: for there is no real resemblance between slavery, as it exists and is defended in the Southern States, and as it is recognized by the word of God, except in the single circumstance of a permanent attachment to a household, and consequent subjection to its head.

I would observe at the outset that an appeal to Scripture in support of Southern bondage, is an afterthought. In the early part of the Republican history of North America, slavery was always viewed, both by slaveholders and ecclesiastical bodies, as an evil unhappily entailed upon a people whose fundamental doctrine is that all men are born equal, and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and to whom had been left the solution of the difficult problem of extinguishing slavery without a bloody revolution. The change which has taken

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place among slaveholders and preachers is great and surprising. They have learned to regard it, and recommend it, as a wise, benevolent, and desirable institution, both for the slave and the master. It is still more surprising to find the ground of expediency and policy abandoned, and a bold claim made upon Biblical support. And what is very extraordinary, is to find the official expositors of the Scriptures taking high and advanced ground in support of human bondage, on professed scriptural principles. We cannot doubt their sincerity; and yet it requires a high exercise of the charity that thinketh no evil, to believe that men, who read the Scriptures with any attention, should be in earnest in proposing to justify or extenuate a bondage legalized by men, and only relieved by the accidental benevolence of temporary masters, by arguments derived from the acknowledged fact of slavery, the pressure of which is, at all points, subjected to the restraints of Divine authority.

God teaches us that slavery is a state not to be desired; and he impresses upon the Israelites the obligations they were under to him, that he had made *them free*. "I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, *that ye should not be their bondmen*." There is something very expressive and suggestive in what follows. "I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go *upright*." Lev. xxvi. 13. In a state of bondage man is bent down under his heavy burden of toil, and he soon loses the consciousness of manhood and becomes ashamed to lift himself up. The New Testament holds out the same idea. In a condition of compulsory bondage, Christians are enjoined to manifest no insubordination and turbulence, yet does the Spirit of the Master teach them thus: "If thou mayest be made free use it rather." 1 Cor. vii. 21. "The slaves are far better as they are than if they were made free," is the shout that issues from the South. "The slaves are far better as they are" is echoed from many a rock—yes, senseless rock—in Nova Scotia. The Spirit of God says, Freedom is best. "If thou mayest be made free use it rather."

The Bible does not discourage the slave from making his escape; and the underground railroad is built in the very spirit of God's counsel. It is condemned by the slaveholder in opposition to a command from the fountain of all righteous legislation. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee, he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him." Deut. xxiii. 15, 16. This is a curious law addressed to a people who hold slaves. Was this intended to be a suggestion that the practice of slavery was in itself contrary to the law of nature and of God? Or is it intended to restrain the violent treatment which would incite the slave to escape, when the master knew that the runaway could not be reclaimed? Or, if there be an exclusive reference to slaves escaping from heathen masters, are we thus to be taught that slavery among the Israelites was essentially different from slavery among the nations, and that the example of a fugitive protected by law never perilled the interests or security of an Israelitish master? Certainly the law is essentially and literally opposed to the "Fugitive Slave Law" of the United States, to which even some Doctors of Divinity gave their support, from Florida to Maine, and which bound the whole nation to opposition to God's expressed will. At all events, we are here taught that freedom is to be desired, that God would encourage that desire, and that men are not permitted to repress it.

No one ever hesitated to admit that the Scripture assumes the existence of slavery among the Israelites, and legislates upon it. Practised by Abraham, his descendants followed his example. Too often successors and sons rather copy what "disgraced their betters" and their sires than their virtues. Many a one has found an apology for the use of intoxicating drinks, in that his praying father would go to a tavern for a dram, who never copied his father's prayers. It does not, however, follow from Divine legislation upon slavery, that the custom had the approbation of God. The law does not require men to hold slaves, but

proceeds simply on the fixed fact of its having a local habitation. There is no evidence, from the record, that it ever occupied a higher place in the Divine estimation than divorce. The law of marriage was fixed, according to the original institution, that every man should have his own wife, and every wife her own husband. The prophet Malachi shews that this was not unknown to the men of the former dispensation. His words are:—"The Lord has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth." Mal. ii. 14, 15. Still it is a fact that many had a plurality of wives; and one was put away for insufficient reasons, to make room for another; and God makes laws to regulate the practice in both cases. Our Lord has shewn us that legislation upon an existing custom does not imply an approbation of it. In answer to a question put to him by the Pharisees, he says, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so;" and then goes on to shew that polygamy and prevalent divorce were only evil, and productive of evil results. Unless it can be shewn, by very different evidence from that which the law respecting slavery supplies, we are warranted to say of it also, That it always was evil, and leading to evil consequences.

A difficulty, however, presents itself, both with respect to divorce and slavery, assuming, as we must, upon the authority of the Saviour, that the current practice of divorce was wrong; and assuming, as we may, that slavery was and is wrong when compulsory, permanent, and hereditary. How shall we reconcile with the character of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin, the legislative allowance of slavery, or divorce, or any form of evil at all? Why is it not denounced, and at once and peremptorily prohibited?

To me the difficulty admits of an easy solution. We know that God hates all sin, and the wages of sin is death. We know that sin shall not go unpunished, because the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. But in reference both to the multiplication of wives and hereditary bondage, God was not promulgating laws simply to express his views of certain practices, but such laws as were to be administered by the Elders of Israel, or, as we would say, by the civil magistrate. The connivance of God, therefore, does not imply that he approves of polygamy and bondage, but that they were evils which the civil magistrate was not competent to deal with. A very great evil may be interwoven with the texture of society, and magisterial attempts at correction would involve the destruction of the community, or prove utterly abortive. We might illustrate this by an example that is at the present time deeply interesting to ourselves. The evils of intemperance are admitted on all hands. The traffic in intoxicating beverages hardly admits of a plausible excuse. Yet however desirable for the good of society, would be the cessation of the traffic, and the extinction of intemperance, it is manifestly beyond the power of laws to put an end to them. So long as men are resolved to drink, intoxicating liquors will be furnished either by manufacture within or by importation. Intemperance, and the means of it could never be legislated out of existence. The Government of Nova Scotia could not establish a legal cordon round its shores, sufficient to exclude all materials of intemperance, even if all internal production was at an end. All that can be done, all that can be rationally attempted, under existing circumstances, is to subject the traffic to such regulations as shall render it less *profitable* to the trader, less *hurtful* to the consumer, and more *disreputable* to both. Whoever examines with care the character and operation of the Scriptural laws respecting slavery, cannot fail to discover that their direct tendency, when faithfully administered, was to put an end to a custom in itself unnatural, full of danger, both to the master and slave, and despotic: the very reverse of all slave laws in North America, the intention and bearing of

which are to extend, perpetuate, and to intensify the horrible degradation of the slave population. The scriptural laws we now proceed to examine.

1. There are *two* methods of obtaining slaves not directly prohibited:—*purchase* and *conquest*; and there is a *third*, arising out of the other two,—*birth*. Either Hebrews or Gentiles might be purchased, although under very different circumstances, as we shall presently show. The truth is that the slavery of an Israelite was merely nominal. See Lev. xxv. 39—46. Every Hebrew was born to the heritage of freedom; but the victory of one tribe over another entitled the conqueror to enslave his captive brother. I recollect only of one case in which the victors manifested a disposition to assimilate the fruits of triumph in Israel, to the permitted effects of the conquest of a heathen enemy. When Pekah, king of Israel, obtained a signal victory over Ahaz, king of Judah, two hundred thousand, with women, sons and daughters, were taken captive, and there was discovered a disposition to enslave them; but low as the ten tribes had sunk in idolatry and immorality, the remonstrance of the prophet Oded prevailed, and they were all restored with much kindness and consideration, to the limits of their native tribe. 2 Kings vi. 22, 2 Chron. xxviii. 8—15.

There is one special prohibitory law which would subject thousands perhaps, in the States, North and South, to capital punishment. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall *surely be put to death*." Ex. xxi. 16.

The Israelites are permitted to enslave captives taken in war (Lev. xx. 11—14), but the law does not recognize the liberty to make war to *obtain slaves*.

I shall only add that colour constitutes no index of a race doomed to servitude without hope. This was reserved for modern refinement in despotism and in injustice.

2. The privileges of slaves were guaranteed by law, and were very large and liberal. To those who have never inquired beyond the fact that patriarchs and other servants of God held slaves, who jump to the conclusion that South

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American slaveholders occupy, before God, the same position with the Father of believers and his descendants, and who are wont to speak of Southern slavery as that patriarchal institution, an exposition of the legal position of the slave in Israel, would excite astonishment. They would soon learn that there was more to contrast than to compare in the systems of Southern and Scriptural bondage. The object of the God of Israel is not to depress, but to elevate, the members of the human family; not to degrade to the rank of chattels, but to raise to the dignity of men. Every unprejudiced inquirer will discover that Israelitish bondage, regulated by law, was an honourable elevation above the condition of the worshipper of birds and beasts, and inanimate objects, who dwelt in the region of darkness and cruelty: and if a man, who is free of debt, and eats his own bread, is more honourable and independent than he that quails before a creditor and trembles at the sight of a constable; when a man is sold to pay his debts, his temporary subjection is a step to freedom. "The borrower is servant to the lender."

The Israelite must EDUCATE his slave Paul informs us that the circumcised person is a debtor to do the whole law. Of course he is under an obligation to know it; and he that is required to circumcise his slave, is bound to teach him the law of the God of Israel. The patriarch and his seed were obliged to give the same religious education to their *children* and to their *servants*, because they received, in common, the seal of God's covenant. The terms of the covenant made with Abraham, and the testimony to his fidelity beautifully harmonize, and unite to confirm the preceding statements. The covenant is this:—"He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in thy house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised." This is the testimony,—God's testimony to the results of Abraham's fidelity to the Covenant obligation. "I know him that he will command his children and his household after

him," observe not his children only, but his household,—his slaves—"and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the thing which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xvii. 12, 13; xviii. 19.) The security of Abraham and his seed, for the enjoyment of promised blessings, presupposes an *equal* respect to the education of servants and sons, under the bond of the covenant. Indeed, where there is no regard to the character or instruction of servants, the bringing up of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, becomes a moral impossibility: nothing short of a miracle can save them. And when God, at Horeb, entered into covenant with the emancipated Israelites, *the hewer of wood and the drawer of water*, stood before the Lord, side by side with their masters, when God would establish them for a people unto himself. (Deut. xxix. 10—15)

When the master rests, so does the slave. The Sabbath God gives alike to both. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy sons, nor thy daughters, nor thy *man servant*, nor thy *maid servant*." (Deut. v. 14.) Contrast this with Southern bondage. The slave is allowed a portion of ground to cultivate for himself; and permitted to improve it from a certain hour on Saturday till Monday.

Israelitish *slavery* was, in this respect, better than British or Provincial *servitude* is, in many cases. When the master and mistress go forth, on the Lord's day, to worship,—no, not to worship, but to show themselves where worshippers meet—the servant girl tastes little of the sweets of rest, while she sweeps rooms, dusts chairs, and cooks a sumptuous and warm dinner for them or for their friends. How often, while the master and mistress and their children, occupy a place in the gorgeous temple, may the groom be seen on the box of the carriage in charge of the horses, till, at the close of the service, they issue forth, having no regard to the spiritual interests of the servant. There is hardly a department of industry, in which, a desire for despatch does not lead men to trample upon the Divine

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law and the Divine rights of the hired servant. On board a Cunard steamer, which, from no other necessity than to catch light breezes, the sailors were being constantly occupied during a Lord's day in shifting sails, I overheard one of them in manifest bitterness, say, "*There is no Sunday here.*" Not the engineer only, whose constant attention may be a matter of necessity; but the cook, the baker, the waiter, know no more rest on the Lord's day than on other days, that the fastidious appetite of the epicure or gourmand may be gratified.

In so far as the weekly sabbath is concerned, Israelitish *slavery* was not only better than the *slavery* of the Southern States, but better than *servitude* among Christians in many cases; and the servant cannot invoke the strong arm of law to protect him. Often the only alternative left to the hired servant or tradesman, is dismissal or Sabbath desecration and toil.

The Sabbatical year also, is the common privilege of master and slave. "The Sabbath of the land shall be meet for you, for thee, and for thy *servant*, and for thy *maid*, and for thy *hired servant*, and for thy stranger which sojourneth with thee." (Lev. xxv. 6.)

The Passover is the slave's privilege. "Every man's *servant* that is bought with money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof." (Ex. xii. 44.)

The slave has a common interest with his master in the Feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles.

Where God reigns, joy to the master brings joy to the slave, a feast to the master is a feast to the slave. "Thou shalt keep the feasts of Weeks unto the Lord thy God." "Thou shalt observe the feast of Tabernacles." "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God,—in thy feast,—thou and thy son and thy daughter, and thy *man servant* and thy *maid servant*, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates." (Deut. xvi. 10-14.) The son, and Levite, and slave are equally honoured before the Lord.

The Priest's *servant* has his portion of the Priest's holy

things, whether born in his house or bought with his money. (Lev. xxii. 11.)

Take once more a general statement of their festal services. The slave shares in them all. Before the Lord, the slave fares as well as his lord. "The tithe of thy corn, and of thy wine, and of thy oil, or of the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flocks, any of thy vows which thou vowest, thy free-will offerings, or heave offerings of thy hand, thou mayest eat, before the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy ~~man~~ *servant* and thy *maid servant*, and the Levite that is within thy gates." (Deut. xii. 17, 18.)

Kindness to the stranger is enforced by the most penetrating of all arguments. They were strangers once themselves. Kindness to the slave they are required to show, because they had been slaves in the land of Egypt.

At these festal seasons the slave would forget his slavery, under the sympathetic care of the God of Israel, who has a place for the bondsman in his own holy habitation.

But did not the slaves form a separate company?—as they do, when they are permitted to share in the feast, the song, the dance, in the South. Had they not a separate table?—as many *Christian* churches, both in the South and North, have for slaves, on sacramental occasions, or those who, like some slaves, are guilty of having a black skin. The Divine instructions give no indications of such social distinctions, and lead to the conclusion that they were not recognized. Sometimes, however, an incidental expression supplies an answer to a difficult question, to which a definite reply is sought in vain, and that expression having no direct connection with the subject which it elucidates. The Israelites were ignorant of any reasons why, in their feasts, slaves should not mix with masters, sons, daughters, and Levites. They knew nothing of the proprieties of Southern life, or the refined elevation of modern society. *They knew only the law of Jehovah.* Once on a time, Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, not a Southern gentleman, nor a Southern clergyman, yet an honourable and an

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upright man, and a judge or governor in the land, held a feast, to which the guests, about thirty persons, had a special invitation. Saul and his slave had been wandering in search of the asses of Kish, Saul's father, which had gone astray, and met Samuel as he was going up to the high place to meet his guests, Samuel, by Divine suggestion, recognized the future King of Israel, and, having brought him into the parlour, set him in the *chiefest place* among them that were bidden. Where did he set the slave of Saul? He set him *beside his master*, in the place of highest honour. I do not read that any of the guests rose and left the table, or even offered any remonstrance against the indignity offered them. But Samuel's parlour was not the saloon of an Atlantic steamer, nor a Halifax or American hotel, nor the dining room of a modern slaveholder. We forget that God has made of one blood all nations in all the earth.

A slave, without any degradation to the family to which he or she belonged, might be honourably married to one of its members. But God has lifted up the ægis of his protecting power over the person of the dependent slave girl. He will not permit her to be deprived of character as well as liberty. If he has, in times of comparative ignorance, winked at slavery, he will not connive at impurity, the bane of all social comforts, confidence, and strength. I bless his name for it heartily, as I entreat him to hear the cry of the poor, dependent, and unfriended slave girl of the profligate South. When an Israelite sold his daughter to another Israelite, and the latter, after having betrothed his slave, was displeased with her, he might allow her to be redeemed, although that seems to have been the privilege proper to man servants; but he is not permitted to sell her to strangers. If he had betrothed her to his son, she is to be treated as a daughter; and if that son married another, her food, her raiment, and her lodging, shall be secured to her in full measure; otherwise she is free without ransom. (Ex. xxi. 7-11)

The like protection is extended to a captive taken in war. The whole passage, which treats of the subject,

breathes so much of the condescending kindness of the Lord, and such a delicate regard to female tenderness, and in particular to the sensibilities of the captive, that I shall read it entire. It demonstrates that the aim of Divine legislation never loses sight of provision for the protection and elevation of the female character and position. "When thou goest to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldst have her to thy wife; then thou shalt bring her home to thy house, and she shall shave her head, and allow her nails to grow; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thy house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt take her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, thou shalt let her go whither she will: but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her." (Deut. xxi. 10-14.) In this passage of moral beauty, surpassing all the moral codes or customs of modern bondage, we note the following things:—(1) It is taken for granted that, captive and slave though she be, the idea is not to be entertained of making her the victim of an illegal and immoral connection. (2) Without offence against God, or the loss of caste among his people, the slave may take the honourable place of the wife of her captor and master. (3) The union is not precipitated; but regard is had to the tender sensibilities, that exist or should be cultivated, in a child abruptly separated from her parents. She shall have a full month to wear the garments of mourning, and shed the tears of regret for the father and mother whom she may see no more. (4) If it should happen to her, as it might to an Israelitish wife, whom God, because of hardness of heart, suffered a husband to put away, she is absolutely free to go whither she will. God says she shall not be sold.

Sheshan, a descendant of Judah, had no sons, and he gave his daughter in marriage to Zarah, an Egyptian, and his *slave*.

Bible slavery did not involve the degradation associated with the name slave in modern parlance. The slavery with which we are familiar, is merciless in its origin, degrading, intellectually and morally, in its operation, and subversive of domestic and national confidence in its end.

Families are not separated against their own consent.

When the master gave a wife to his Hebrew slave, the term of his service being expired, he cannot take his wife or his children out with him, but the master cannot compel him to leave. He may choose, for love of his wife and children, to remain in a state of servitude, and the master must accept of his surrender of his freedom. When the Hebrew head of a house is brought into bondage, his family attend him; and when he is liberated, his family is liberated with him. (Ex. xxi. 2-6; Lev. xxv. 39-41.) It is true that these cases refer to Hebrews. So far as I have noticed, the case of separation by sale is never contemplated; and is treated as one that required no specific legislation. It is a barbarism that the God of Israel seems to assume his covenant people never could entertain. As the man servant is pledged by covenant to bring up his children in the fear and service of God, it would be utterly inconsistent with the recognition of that covenant, to place parties in a position, in which the fulfilment of a religious obligation would become physically impossible. The nature of the covenant of circumcision might be regarded as superseding the necessity of making a special law, prohibiting the forcible separation of parents and children.

If a man have no children, his slave inherits his property. Of course there is an exception to this in the case of the real estate of an Israelite in Canaan, which could not be held by a Gentile, even when proselyted to the service of the God of Israel. "Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir." (Gen. xv. 2, 3.) This is decisive of custom. And who have a better right to possess property than those who have earned it by their sweat

and toil. The man who works is entitled to the fruit of his labour. Let an honest, a moral, and a diligent slave, be set over against a disobedient, a profligate, and idle son. Which has the best moral claim to the inheritance?

3. Slaves were liable to be punished by their masters.

The power of the master, however, was regulated by the law of God. The Israelitish code is, in every part of it, adapted to call into exercise, and to strengthen, the tenderest sensibilities of our nature. The weak and the destitute, the poor and the helpless, are uniformly recommended to the kindest consideration of the people. The infidel, and the inconsiderate dupe of bold and reckless assertions, are ever confounding the special charge to execute the judgment of God upon the Canaanites, with the laws intended to regulate the social state of a settled community. And even that charge, accompanied as it was by the assurance, that it was not because of their righteousness that they were sustained by the Divine hand in their wars against the Canaanites; and with the express intimation that the sole cause of the extermination of that devoted people, was their idolatry and abominable impurity, was well calculated to repress the spirit of ambition and blood-thirstiness, and to leave an indelible impression upon their minds, that if they adopt like courses, they shall have a like end. And the fact is, that instead of needing to have the spirit of war and cruelty repressed by Divine authority, they are constantly being subjected to the charge of shortcoming in the execution of the commandment. They make haste to have done with war, and to settle down into the quiet of agricultural life, and the cultivation of domestic affections and virtues.

—The laws which forbade a man to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,—to leave the ass of an enemy under his burden without help,—to take the dam when the eggs or the young are removed from a bird's nest,—to seethe a kid in its mother's milk,—to afflict the widow or the fatherless child, with the assurance that God would hear their cry, and avenge their cause,—to vex or oppress the stranger, and not rather to relieve him in his straits,—were

not likely to leave the slave to the will of a capricious and cruel master. If the master deprived either servant or maid of an eye, or even knock out a tooth, they are *free*. (Ex. xxi. 26, 27.) "If a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hands, he shall surely be punished." (Ex. xxi. 30.) There was no need of specification. The law was ordained of old, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." (Gen. ix. 6.) "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death, but he shall be surely put to death." (Num. xxxv. 31.)

There is a supplementary clause, which requires a more extended discussion. "Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: *for he is his money*." (verse 21.) This has sometimes been interpreted in support of the idea that the Israelites were taught to attach less value to the life of a slave than of a freeman, and that the value of the life was no more than the money which he cost. Nothing could be more unjust and inconclusive. The reason assigned for the punishment of death in case of murder, is an ample refutation of the distinction supposed, between the life of the bond and of the free. "In the image of God made he man." Are we to understand that, when the Israelites were slaves in the land of Egypt, the Egyptian master is to be justified, in that he had despised their lives? Contempt of the character, the comfort, the elevation, and the life of the slave was reserved for *Christian* statesmen, *Christian* masters, and *Christian* ministers, falling back upon the laws and customs of heathenism,—the dark places of the earth which were and are full of cruelty.

When a man's life is perilled, in a court of justice, under a capital charge, the uniform language of the judge to the jurors is,—“If there be a doubt on your minds of the conclusiveness of the evidence, let the prisoner have the benefit of it.” This is uniformly considered a proof, that the glory of Britain is, that, in the law, and the administration of it, justice and mercy advance with equal steps. We have not yet advanced above the justice, the mercy, the partiality

of Israelitish law. It is not the wisdom of Egypt, of Israel, of Moses, but an emanation from the throne of God. So tender is God of life that, "At the mouth of *two* witnesses, or *three* witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death, be put to death; at the mouth of *one* witness, he shall not be put to death." (Dent. xvii. 6.) It is evident that, according to this rule, there would be few capital convictions, and many guilty persons would escape; and, in reflecting upon this law, we are reminded of our own approved maxim, that, "It is better that nine guilty persons should escape, than that one honest person suffer."

• The wisdom of God makes legal provision for the integrity of a witness, in a way that discovers his perfect knowledge of man. The witnesses must take precedence in carrying the sentence of death into execution. "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him, to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people." (Dent. xvii. 7.) Many a man, whose conscience is put under the feet of revenge, or of interest, or of ambition, would quail at the proposition to execute the sentence which his own testimony demands. The eye of an innocent man is terrible to his enemy. Even superstition would do what there existed not integrity to execute.

"*He is his money.*" This affords a presumptive evidence that the owner of the slave did not *intend* to do him any serious injury, when he smote him with his staff. The loss of his slave is the loss of his money. To kill the slave, is to throw away his money. To strike a man in the eye to its destruction, or in the mouth to the knocking out of a tooth, while it discovers no design to take away life, manifests so much subserviency to passion, that the slave must be considered safer away from his master; and God gives him his liberty. Death, in the case before us, may have been the punishment of the master's inconsiderate rashness. When the stricken slave continues a day or two, although, there being no evidence to the contrary, it may be *probable* that he died from the effect of the stroke; still it is *possible* that he may have died from some other cause, and there remains a doubt of the master's guilt. The stricken man

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may have been the subject of a lurking, and not apprehended disease, that rendered a blow mortal, which otherwise would have been innocuous.

4. Whilst Hebrews might be sold, and so enslaved, there were special limitations of the servitude to which they were subjected.

(1.) *They could not be held to bond service, without their own consent, for more than six years.* "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve; and in the seventh year he shall go out free, for nothing." (Ex. xxi. 2.) When poverty compelled him to surrender his liberty, his servitude might extend to the year of Jubilee, and not beyond. If he have sold himself to a stranger, there is the same limitation to the term of his bondage. In both cases he must be treated as a "*yearly hired servant*," and neither his brother nor the stranger may rule over him with rigour; and under the hand of the stranger, his brethren are to take care that his treatment be just. (Lev. xxv. 39-55).*

The difficulty of leaving wife or children is obviated by obliging the individual to whom he is sold, to take also his family with him, so that wife and children are secured from want; and poverty does not necessarily scatter the members of a family abroad. This is necessarily implied in the injunction, that at the termination of servitude, his wife and children shall go out with him.

An Israelite sold as a stranger, might be redeemed at any time. Any of his near relatives might redeem him; or if he were able, he might redeem himself. And the master cannot fix his price. The price of redemption is regulated by law. The original liability is ascertained, and the number of years from the sale to the year

* By comparing Exodus xxi. 2, with Lev. xxv. 39, 40, it is evident that in some cases the Israelite, when sold, was free at the end of six years; in other cases, did not obtain his liberty till the year of Jubilee. I have followed Scott, who is inclined to the idea that *compulsory* bondage terminated with the Sabbatical year. I am not fully satisfied that this is the true solution of the apparent inconsistency. I would suggest it as possible, that the debtor should obtain his freedom on the Sabbatical year, and if his debt had not been fully liquidated after the Sabbatical year, he must return to service. The service was, in no case, extended beyond the year of Jubilee.

of Jubilee. Then the cost of redemption is in proportion to the years of his anticipated bondage that remain; or the years from the time of redemption to the Jubilee, compared with the years which he has served.

And when the seventh year brings liberty to the involuntary bondsman among the Israelites, the temporary slave is not to be sent away empty handed into a cold and selfish world; or if he have possessions to which to return, he must have wherewith to set up house keeping. "When thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him *liberally* out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine press; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to-day." (Deut. xv. 13-15.)

These considerations have an important bearing on the question of slavery under the New Testament dispensation. As the bondage of slaves from heathen lands alone, was permanent and hereditary; and as there is now neither Jew nor Greek, as the middle wall of partition has been broken down, never to be restored, there can be, since the death of Christ, no permanent and hereditary slavery with Divine approval. It has ceased to have the allowance of Jehovah; and every man holding a slave and his children in bondage, does it under the uplifted hand of a God of vengeance, who will strike in his own time.

I am, accordingly, prepared to recognize the slavery which the Word of God sanctions. Let God speak. Most fondly cherished theory, no specious speculation, shall ever close my ears to His utterance: nor shall the wisdom of the wise, the clamours of the multitude, or the despotic threats of the interested, or the infidel, deter me from recognizing the authority of his words.

Who can resist with a father or mother, under the pressure of a large family, binding son or daughter to a respectable house-holder, till the child is of age; when that child shall be treated as a yearly hired

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servant, well fed, well clothed, and taught to work and earn an independence, enjoying, meanwhile, the moral and religious privileges of the family. And I believe it is understood that, in such cases, the bond servant is not to be sent away empty. No one finds fault, and this is just one form of the slavery to which an Israelite was sometimes subjected.

Who would find fault, if the Legislature of Nova Scotia were to pass a law, by which a debtor, unwilling or unable to pay, would be obliged to work till his debt was discharged. Many a loud complaint have I heard of the dishonesty and falsehood of men, who obtained food for their families, or money to procure necessary things, and, promising to pay in work, afterwards either refused to fulfil or evaded their engagement. Such a law would be an improvement upon any insolvent act that has yet been passed. It is God's law of insolvency. It would have the effect of making men more careful not to contract debts. It would completely neutralize the efforts of those who would shield the debtor from the just claims of the creditor. It would at once put an end to the alienation of property that the creditor might be defrauded. It would counteract the rapacity of an unfeeling creditor, when he found that he must provide for the delicate wife, and the sickly or infantile children, while the healthy and the strong are paying, in hard labour, a just debt. Many a time a considerable debt would be forgiven by a man, before he would have a large family cast upon his hands for five or six years. It would diffuse a spirit of independence, when men realize that they are certainly reaching that point, when they can say they "owe no man anything;" and have learned the sweets of following the Scripture rule of working quietly, and eating their *own* bread. This was another form of slavery among the Israelites.

I never yet could realize the justice of any law that, under any conditions, would send out the debtor upon society, to flaunt his finery in the eyes of his creditor, who yet has to wear often the humble garb of hard toil. An industrious man may have earned a competence for him-

self by the wear of bone and muscle, by the outlay of blood and sweat; and there would be no injustice in compelling the man who has borrowed the money so earned, to pay it, though it cost the debtor as much to do so, as it cost the creditor to realize it. What was procured by the sweat of the brow, should, if necessary, when borrowed, be repaid by the sweat of the brow.

Many a proud and imperious slaveholder in the Southern States, has been indebted to a despised Yankee, and found unable to pay. Bring him to the North. Place him under the cow hide of his creditor. Let him taste the sweets of the discipline of "the peculiar institution"—patriarchal economy, as he would call it, till he have paid his debt, in bondage with his wife and children. Before the end of the year,—before the end of a month, he would find illumination beaming from his burden. He would be the fiercest abolitionist north of Mason's and Dickson's line.

We are accustomed to punish crimes by subjecting the criminal to hard labour. I do not at present recall any case of slavery among the Israelites, upon which this practice might be based. Manslaughter subjected the criminal to confinement for life to the limits of the city of Refuge, unless the death of the High Priest intervened.

But "No inference. Come to the New Testament." I am ready. What do you want: "Does not the Epistle to Philemon fully establish the righteousness of the fugitive slave law?" No; not at all.

The wolf was once sent to school. He learned his letters with commendable speed. But when he began to spell, whatever was the combination of letters, to him they spelled nothing but *sheep*. I was once told of a Presbyterian minister in the north of Ireland, who could preach treason from every text in the Bible. He emigrated to the United States sometime about 1798. So it is with the slaveholder and his sympathizers. Any combination of letters in the Bible spells *slavery*. Any verse in the Bible will supply a text from which to preach in defence of slavery.

"But did not Paul send back Onesimus, the servant—the slave, of Philemon—to his master?" He did; but *not*

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to slavery. He entreated Philemon to receive him, not as a servant, but above a servant, as a brother beloved, whether in the house or in the church, with the full confidence that his request would be granted, yea, even, that he would be received as Paul himself. This assurance is strongly implied in the engagement to be answerable, if Onesimus had wronged Philemon, or owed him anything. The apostle, at the same time, informs Philemon that what he importunately solicits from *love*, he might have boldly enjoined, from a regard to *Christian consistency*—the terms in our translation are, “as convenient.”

No man has any right to free another man's slave. Paul recognizes the right of manumission as vested in the master, and would therefore do nothing without the consent of Philemon. It would be a violation of human rights, and of humanity, to send back the slave to chains. But if he were morally certain the master would set free the returned bondsman, a legal liberation, by the process of the master, would be preferable to an unrecognized freedom, which unforeseen events in Providence might expose to interruption.

A few remarks upon the injunctions of Paul and Peter to slaves, will bring this lecture to a close. Both enjoin submission, with great earnestness and force. The interpretation is easy, and perfectly consistent with the denial of the justice of modern slavery.

1. The bondage in which they were was *involuntary*. “If thou mayest be made free, use it rather.” It is not to be supposed that a heathen master would respect the conscientious subjection of his slave to the Divine testimony, the obligation of which upon himself he did not recognize. Believing masters might not at once apprehend the obligation to emancipate a Christian slave, willingly to remain with him. To set free a heathen slave, would be virtually to consign him to the corrupting influences of heathen associations, and manifest an indifference to his spiritual welfare. In the meantime he is with him as “a yearly hired servant,” to whom he will give that which is “just and equal.”

A relation which may not be lawfully formed by a Christian, having been entered into in a heathen or unbelieving state, may be justly respected, when one has been brought to a knowledge of the truth. A wife having been brought to Christ in her marriage state, may not leave her heathen husband; and a husband, having been brought to Christ, may not put away his heathen wife; although it is contrary to the law of the Lord, for a believer to enter into marriage with an unbeliever.

Relations and observances that were recognized or required under the former economy, were not rudely broken off in the inception of the present dispensation, although their warrant or obligation had ceased, but were allowed silently to pass away, under the operation of principles recognized and applied. The seventh day Sabbath, the Jewish feasts, temple services, and circumcision, are examples. So slavery cannot long exist when the law of Christ is recognized, even if the civil magistrate never interfered with it. But Christianity must soon pass away, when Christian ministers are slaveholders, and advocates of slavery.

2. Slaves are plainly taught that their paramount obligation is to the Lord, "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." (1 Cor. vii. 23.) Whatever they do, they are required to do heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men. Of course they must disobey their heathen masters, when by obedience they would sin against God. The words of Peter have an evident reference to a case of contrariety between the will of God and the will of the master. "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man, *for conscience toward God*, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. If, *when ye do well*, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (1 Peter, ii. 18-20.)

3. The Apostles require nothing of slaves, that is not due by hired servants,—simplicity, fidelity, and regard for their masters' interests. There is, therefore, nothing implied in the commands laid upon servants that supposes the permanence or even the existence of involuntary and heredi-

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tary bondage. The language of the Apostle to servants is just as appropriate in the British Islands, or in the British Colonies, as in the Confederate States. Servitude, under the most advantageous circumstances, involves the exercise of much self denial, from the necessity of which it is desirable to be liberated. To any servant it might with all propriety be said as well as to the slave, "If thou mayest be free, use it rather."

4. The slave is required to act upon a principle, or according to a rule, adapted to recommend Christianity to his heathen master.

In all the relations of life, we are to take good care, "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed," through our vicious conduct, but that we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 10.) This is specially required of servants. Their dependent state, their constant superintendence by their masters, the intimate connection between their fidelity and their masters' interests and comfort, present great facilities for exhibiting Christ as developed in their daily deportment. A heathen master could not fail to mark the difference between a faithful Christian slave, and his fellow-slaves in a state of unbelief; or the difference between his present conduct and his attitude in a heathen state. His *simplicity*—"singleness of heart,"—his *conscientiousness*,—"not with eye service as men pleasers,"—his *cheerfulness*—"with good will doing service;" (Eph. vi. 5-7); his *respectful demeanor*,—"counting his master worthy of all honour;" (Tim. vi. 1.); "not answering again,"—his *honesty*,—"not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity;" (Tit. ii. 10.); his *patience*,—enduring "grief, suffering wrongfully;" (1. Pet. ii. 19.)—must leave an indelible impression of the adaptation of Christianity to rectify the heart and regulate the conduct. The heathen master might ridicule the Christian slave's *notions*, or punish him for contempt of the gods; but he would trust him. The professor of religion who is contented to have other than Christian servants, brings his own piety into serious doubt. It is, on the other hand, a painful evidence of ignorance and want

of principle among professing servants, that masters should have occasion to say, they are better served by others than by members of the Church, and, in particular, of their own denomination.

3. The command laid upon the master further elucidates the position of the slave.

"Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal." (Col. iv. 1.) "Ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." (Eph. vi. 9.) Dr. Macknight's comment on "just and equal" is:—"I think the Apostle's meaning is, that masters should consider it as strict justice, to give to their slaves fit maintenance through their whole life, for the service of their whole life; and, in the second clause, that they should consider it as equity to distinguish the most faithful among them by particular rewards." A prophet of a less favoured dispensation would have illuminated Dr. Macknight on the subject of justice to servants. "*Maintenance* for the whole life for the service of the whole life," is the Doctor's idea of *justice*. "Woe to him who useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work," is the idea of the prophet. (Jer. xxii. 13.) The Doctor considers *equality* the reward of the more deserving. The Apostle had taught servants, in the verses immediately preceding, to obey their masters with honesty of purpose, with simplicity and hearty diligence; and now he requires the master to reciprocate the fidelity of the slave, and deal uprightly by him. Upon the same principle we must interpret the phrase, "Do the same things unto them." In the preceding verse we are told that "Whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord," and here the Apostle tells the master to act according to the same rule: Food and raiment are given to the slave by the master and Dr. Macknight, yet these are the mere *appendages* of the recompense of reward in the kingdom of God. The Doctor's gloss again is "moderating threatening." The Apostle says, "Let it alone."

Henry Ward Beecher would discuss the subject of "just and equal" in some such way as this. Take a man's work

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and give him no wages,—“*just and equal.*” Sell a man like an ox or a sheep,—“*just and equal.*” Separate husbands and wives, and compel them to take other partners,—“*just and equal.*” Take children from their parents, and sell them into a bondage from which they are never to return,—“*just and equal.*” Flog men or women, or children, till the flesh is torn away by every blow of the whip, and wash the wounds with salt and cayenne,—“*just and equal.*” Compel the slave girl to submit to the gratification of lust, and sell the fruit of your own body to bondage, degradation, and death. We would ask *is this “just and equal?”*

In preparing this lecture, and now in presenting the subject of which it treats, to your consideration, I have been influenced by the following reasons:—

1. A growing indifference to the evil of slavery appears in many parts of these Provinces.

2. Sympathy with the Southern Confederacy is likely to promote this indifference, even if it should not lead to an advocacy of the “peculiar institution” in which it glories.

3. Ministers, whose piety is highly lauded, speak very confidently of the ample support the Bible furnishes to slavery. The argument in the lecture is confidently submitted as an answer to all such as appeal to Scripture in support of a system which ignores honesty, mercy, purity; and for piety substitutes a mawkish devotionalism.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that Christianity and Southern slavery have no affinity whatever. To attempt to vindicate the slavery of the Confederate States, sustained by iniquitous and cruel laws, and applauded by professed teachers of Christianity, by appealing to the Bible, is an attempt at gross imposition. Its advocates first deceive themselves, and then go forth to propagate the lie which the Adversary has taught them. In the overthrow of Babylon, among those who weep and lament over her destruction, are those who are dealers in *slaves* (bodies) and souls of men.



